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ABSTRACT

This study explores (a) the relative effects of the Learning to Learn Program on the educational competencies of the experimental children (E) who attended the Learning to Learn Program as compared to control children (C) who participated in traditional preschool and primary grade programs; and (b) the development and longitudinal educational effects of different approaches to preschool intervention following termination of their early childhood education experiences. The study seeks to discover whether leveling off occurs in E or C children's intellectual and educational abilities by the end of second grade, one year after termination of their early childhood educational experiences. (Author/DP)

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DEVELOPMENTAL AND EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL MODEL OF COMPENSATORY EDUCATION, THE LEARNING TO LEARN PROGRAM

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Developmental and Educational Implications of a Successful Model of Compensatory Education; The Learning to Learn Program[1]

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Recent developments in educational theory suggest that preschool programs can provide disadvantaged children with a set of experiences that will help diminish the effects of poverty and educational deficits. Supportive evidence has come from a few Head Start programs and laboratory preschools which produce relatively large improvements in learning ability. But the majority of Head Start and other compensatory preschool programs, although producing measurable immediate gains, have not produced lasting increases in children's intellectual and educational development.

This study explores (a) the relative effects of the Learning to Learn Program on the educational competencies of the experimental children (E) who attended the Learning to Learn Program as compared to control children (C) who participated in traditional preschool and primary grade programs; and (b) the development and longitudinal educational effects of different approaches to preschool intervention following termination of their early childhood education experiences. The study seeks to discover whether leveling off occurs in E or C children's intellectual and educational abilities by the end of second grade, one year after termination of their early childhood educational experiences.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The Learning to Learn Program is a sequential early childhood approach organized and operated so that it (a) is appropriate to the stage of cognitive development of the child, (b) makes maximal use of the child's abilities, (c) uses a planned sequence of environmental stimulation based on a knowledge of the stages of cognitive development, (d) emphasizes the process of learning, (e) guides and structures the learning experiences with the goal of self-support and coping on his own rather than presenting the child with a large amount of random, unorganized stimulation.

The teacher is cast in the role of a facilitator and evaluator of children's learning. As a facilitator she inquires, clarifies, extends, and describes children's behavior; and as an evaluator she is a listener and observer. She displays alertness, warmth, patience, tolerance, and a

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sensitive awareness of the children's needs, listening to the child with expressions that indicate she really believes his comments are important.

The Learning to Learn Program enlists the cooperation of parents to supplement the school program with a home program. The parents participate in monthly instructional sessions to point out that they are vital links to their children's educational developmental process. This program promotes at home the school's philosophy and attitudes toward learning, by strengthening parent-child relationships through the home use of their children's curricular materials from school.

The curriculum is designed in a sequential game format, which moves from concrete games to representational forms, and finally to an abstract level; the curricular materials are organized and sequenced developmentally. The materials are designed exclusively to elicit behavior and performance that are not stimulated by those in traditional classrooms. Because of the progressive levels of the materials, the teacher is aware of her daily educational objectives with a particular child. The curriculum is developed so that there are no instructions to memorize, and the suggested presentation is flexible enough to allow for teacher spontaneity and individuality that promotes good social, emotional, and cognitive growth for each child.

The Learning to Learn Program utilizes two distinctly different classroom arrangements as an educational environment. One is the large classroom where the child's developmental needs to explore materials and play with friends (or with social relationships) is served. The large classroom is equipped with a variety of unstructured or semistructured materials. The child has freedom of choice and movement and no rigid demands for tidiness are made upon him. All experiences are child-initiated and child-guided. The child determines the direction and duration of the experiences in which he participates. The second educational setting is a classroom or partitioned area where only a small group of two, three, or four children work with the curriculum preselected by the teacher (approximately 20 min/day), and where activities are teacher-initiated and teacher-guided. Everybody including the teacher sits close together on the floor. The teacher introduces the curriculum materials and tells the children they are going to play a game with them. They are given a chance to manipulate or talk about the material before the game begins. The teacher combines words with actions to demonstrate with her fingers or hands performing the actions she is describing. She stimulates the children to search and inquire, to exchange ideas, feelings, and information. She is interested in how they go about the learning tasks presented in the curriculum, with finishing the game or winning the game secondary to the child's decision-making and problem-solving processes.

DESIGN OF PROJECT

Sample selections. During May and June of 1968, black children were identified through the school system and through contact with churches in the poverty areas of Jacksonville, Florida. Participants were also secured

by public announcements inviting parents who were below the poverty level as established by the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) guidelines of 1968 to apply for enrollment of their children in the Learning to Learn Program. Finally, the assistance of the welfare department and pediatricians in the community was also utilized to identify eligible families.

The initial testing and screening of children for participation in the project was conducted during the summer of 1968 at the Learning to Learn School in Jacksonville, Florida. All children came from the same neighborhood. Forty-four four-year-olds and 42 five-year-olds were selected to participate in the project after the testing of approximately 50 four-year-olds and 60 five-year-olds.

The 44, four-year-olds were divided and placed either in the E group or C group by matching their performance on the Stanford Binet Intelligence Scale. The 42 five-year-olds were also divided and placed either into Group E or Group C by matching the children on the Stanford Binet.

The Preproject means SBIQ scores for Groups E and C are presented in Table 1. The E and C groups did not significantly differ on the Stanford Binet.

TABLE 1

Preproject Means, S.D.'s and t values for the Experimental Group and their Matched Treatment Control Group on the Stanford Binet

Measure	Group	N	$\bar{X}$ Score	SD	t
Stanford Binet	E	43	88.6	11.0	.37
	C	43	89.4	8.6	.37

Experimental and control treatment. During the 1968-69 school year the Learning to Learn Demonstration Project was initiated. The E children participated in the Learning to Learn Program for either two or three consecutive (1968-69 to 1970-71) years through first grade, while the C children participated in traditional early childhood educational experiences (OEO sponsored Day Care, Title I kindergarten, and public school first grade).

During the 1971-72 school year, E and C groups were enrolled in eight different public schools in Jacksonville, Florida. The data for this study were collected during the spring (April and May) of the children's second-grade term in public school.

Hypothesis. It is hypothesized that the E group of black children who participated in the Learning to Learn Program would be developmentally and educationally superior to their C group, as measured by a wide variety of developmental measures at the end of second grade.

RESULTS

Table 2 represents a post-second-grade analysis of variance comparisons between E and C groups one year after termination of their early childhood educational experiences. The results indicate that E children who participated in the Learning to Learn Program made significantly greater intellectual, educational, linguistic, and personal-social gains, one year after termination of their early childhood program than their matched treatment controls.

The children's Stanford Binet IQ scores were 17 mean points higher than their controls, and their grade point average in their academic subjects was approximately one letter grade higher. The children in the E group have mastered the rudiments and skills necessary for reading at grade level as demonstrated by their performance on the individualized reading measures (2.8 = grade level at time of testing). The evaluation of the language measures revealed similar consistent results. The children in the E group have developed language competencies encompassing the capabilities to express themselves and to use verbal reasoning ability at a much higher level than their controls.

The results of the arithmetic achievement measures used in this evaluation indicate that the Learning to Learn Program children have mastered both the computational and symbolic aspects of arithmetic that are appropriate for their grade level. The E children also scored significantly higher on achievement-related behavior, self-concept, grades in citizenship, and perceptual motor ability.

The results indicate that the E children were achieving at an academic level commensurate with educational success. The sequential early childhood Learning to Learn Program has had a significant and positive impact on the cognitive, educational, and personal-social development of these children.

DISCUSSION

This study strongly supports the theory that early childhood education is important and advantageous to the overall development of young children and that it is particularly important for children from impoverished backgrounds. It also indicates that a well-organized, sequential early childhood education program based on a Learning to Learn approach philosophy achieves greater developmental and educational gains than one without this orientation and emphasis.

Progress in learning, school achievement, and personal-social development in the primary grades of public school has been consistent and positive for participants from the Learning to Learn Program, but haphazard or even nonexistent for black children from traditional preschool backgrounds, thus indicating that the specific type of early childhood education experiences directly and differentially influences children's educational competencies in public school settings.

TABLE 2

Post-Second-Grade Analysis of Variance Comparisons between the Experiment and Control Groups

Measure	Group	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df BG	df WG	F ratio
Intelligence							
Stanford-Binet IQ	E	39	103.64	13.62			
	C	39	86.31	11.96	1	76	35.67***
Achievement							
School grades	E	38	2.59	.97			
	C	39	1.69	.86	1	75	29.85***
Reading							
Spache Diagnostic Reading Test-Instructional reading level	E	39	3.35	1.04			
	C	39	1.96	1.12	1	76	32.17***
Arithmetic							
Arithmetic subtest of the Stanford Achievement Test II	E	39	2.37	.73			
	C	38	1.62	.76	1	75	19.34***
Language							
Ability to express ideas-Vocal Encoding subtest of ITPA	E	39	86.36	18.02			
	C	39	73.95	15.46	1	76	10.66**
Verbal reasoning ability-Audio-Vocal Association subtest of ITPA	E	39	94.21	11.55			
	C	39	78.97	10.44	1	76	37.32***
Personal-Social							
Self-concept-Florida Key	E	37	58.49	12.37			
	C	39	49.46	24.28	1	74	4.10*
Achievement motivation-teacher ratings	E	39	13.13	3.59			
	C	35	10.46	4.56	1	72	7.92**
Citizenship grades	E	38	2.26	.83			
	C	39	1.74	1.16	1	75	5.07*
Perceptual motor							
Bender Gestalt (error score)	E	39	4.74	2.27			
	C	39	7.21	3.80	1	76	12.07***

Note: Abbreviations: ITPA = Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities
BG = between groups degrees of freedom
WB = within groups degrees of freedom

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$
***$p < .001$

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In conclusion, the Learning to Learn Program successfully provides for the broad range of developmental needs of early childhood as well as for the specific abilities and skills that insure educational competencies through primary grades. The research results clearly document that, at the end of second grade black children who participated in the experimental preschool and first-grade program were more advanced in their cognitive, educational, and personal-social functioning than children with the same socioeconomic background who attended traditional early childhood education programs.